



OXTED COMMUNITY HALL
Oxted
RH8

County of Surrey

An archaeological evaluation report

June 2005



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

OXTED COMMUNITY HALL
Oxted
RH8

County of Surrey

Archaeological assessment

Site Code: SY-OXT05

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) on the site of the proposed Oxted Community Hall), Oxted, Surrey. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by Oxted Community Hall Appeal Committee.

The site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential as defined by the Surrey County Council and within part of a now deconsecrated churchyard. Following the recommendations of the local planning authority's archaeological advisor two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site.

The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. Natural sand was found in both trenches ranging from 105.60m at its highest, on the east side of the site, and 105.11m OD, its lowest, on the northern side. The natural was sealed with topsoil and turf. No archaeological evidence was found. During the evaluation, any additional graves found, and not previously located on the current site survey plan, were added.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site, the report concludes the impact of the proposed redevelopment concerns the graves, five of which lie within the footprint of the proposed development, two of which lie within the proposed area of the west wall foundation.

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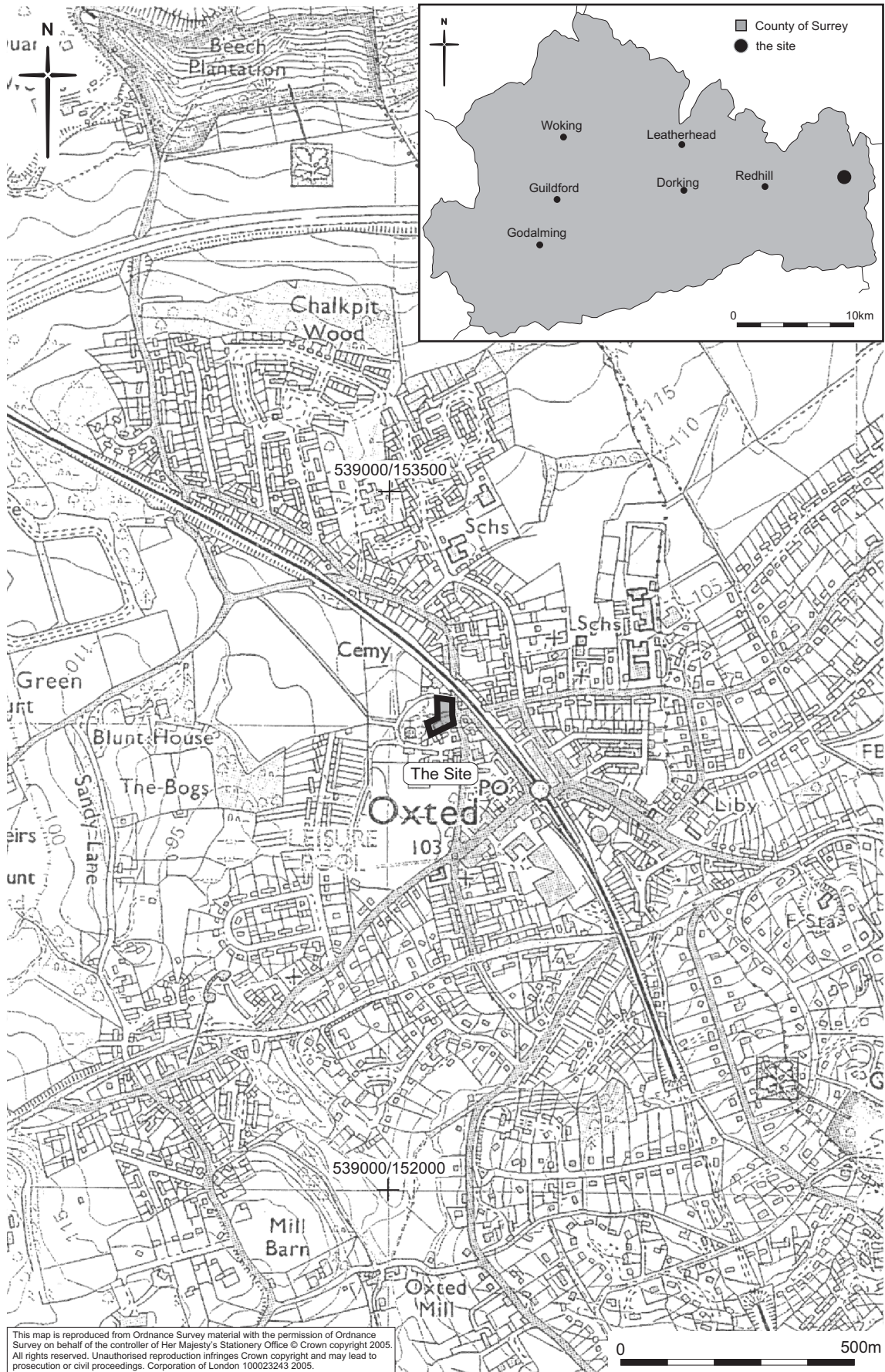


Fig 1 Site location

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The proposed development of Oxted Community Hall, Oxted, is located in the County of Surrey and is bounded on the east by Church Lane and Barrow Green Road, to the south by residential buildings, to the west by St Mary's Church and a cemetery, and to the north by a Veterinary Surgery and further areas of cemetery (National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is 539120 153035). Modern ground level adjacent to the site lies at 105.00m OD, whilst the cemetery area, lies some 0.60m higher at 105.60m OD and the community hall slightly lower at 104.26m OD. The site code is SY-OXT05.

A desktop *archaeological assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area the site (Lyon, 2005). The *assessment* document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential.

The archaeological field evaluation was carried out on two trenches between 6th and 7th June 2005.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework and work in ecclesiastical environments in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological Assessment*, (see Section 2.1 and 3, Lyon, 2005). An *Archaeological Method Statement* (Hoad, 2005) formed the project design for the exercise.

1.3 Planning background

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority recommended approval of the *Archaeological Assessment* (Lyon, 2005) to the planning authority in March 2005. It was further recommended that it would be appropriate than an archaeological condition be applied to planning consent requiring archaeological investigation. Under this condition, a written scheme of investigation for such works was required, and approved prior to the commencement of development. This was submitted and approved in May 2005 (Hoad, 2005).

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Oxted Community Hall Appeal Committee and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999).

Field evaluation, and the *Evaluation report* which comments on the results of that exercise, are defined in the most recent English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:

- formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or;
- formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them, and/or;
- formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research.

1.5 Aims and objectives

As the evaluation process is unlikely to provide sufficient information to fully address specific archaeological research objectives, the archaeological brief was essentially limited to establishing the levels and nature of surviving archaeological deposits.

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the evaluation (Section 2.2, Hoad, 2005):

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

What are the earliest deposits identified?

Are there any deposits that could be related to the mound on which the church is situated, and if so, what are they?

What are the latest deposits identified?

What is the density of burials on the site, and how have they affected the earlier archaeological deposits?

2 Topographical and historical background

The following is a summary derived from the more detailed discussion of the site's background found in the *Archaeological Assessment report* (Section 3, Lyon, 2005).

2.1 Topography

Oxted is situated in the landscape of the North Downs, on a narrow band of Lower Greensand and a strip of Gault Clay, which crosses Surrey from east to west. This widens out and becomes the valley of the River Wey in the west of the county. To the north is the chalk of the North Downs and to the south is a wide band of Weald Clay. The River Eden runs north-south through the town, eventually into the Medway.

Modern ground surface in the cemetery lies between 105.45m OD on the west rising to 105.75m OD.

2.2 Prehistoric

A diversity of evidence from the Palaeolithic onwards is recorded in the area. Palaeolithic artefacts are known from the area and have mainly been found in the terrace gravels of the River Wey, near Farnham, including Mousterian type handaxes and mammal and woolly rhinoceros faunal remains dating from c 36,000 BP. Finds have also been retrieved from the North Downs around Banstead, Kingswood and Walton on the Hill and Limpsfield village where over 500 artefacts were collected in total. The Mesolithic period is represented in palaeoenvironmental records from sites in the area, including at North Park Farm in Bletchingly and flint artefacts found on Chichelle Road in close proximity to the site. Neolithic activity in the area is evidenced by flint axes at Limpsfield.

The Bronze Age is well represented in Oxted by isolated flint implements, including Early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowheads and Bronze Age urns from Oxted Secondary School and Blunt House at Ridgeway Field. Sixty Bronze Age barrows have been recorded in Surrey, some of which are in the district of Tandridge. Barrow Green in Oxted contains a large mound, which was originally thought to be a barrow, one of the largest recorded in Britain.

Iron Age settlers built several hill forts along the Greensand Escarpment, east of Limpsfield Chart and close to Goodley Stock and at Dry Hill, four to five miles south. Close to hilltop trackway in Tatsfield, an Iron Age coin hoard was found in 1927. A Late Iron Age gold stater was also discovered in Limpsfield.

2.3 Roman

Aside from the ancient track known as the Pilgrims Way, three Roman roads ran through Surrey: Richborough to London (Watling Street); Chichester to London (Stane Street, Ermine Street), and the road from Silchester to Staines. There is evidence for small settlements on the roads radiating out from London, for instance at Merton and Croydon. Further there were settlements at Staines and perhaps Dorking,

where there was evidence of 1st- to 4th-century buildings. A small settlement may also have existed at Godstone, to the west of Oxted, evidenced by finds including coins and brooches. At Trevereux, south of Limpsfield, pottery evidence indicates an Iron Age/Romano-British occupation site. A Roman villa is known from Titsey, immediately north of Oxted, excavated in the 1800s. Isolated Roman finds are also known from the Oxted area. Roman-British burial urns, possibly originally associated with burials, were found at Blunt House and Ox Pasture Field. A 2nd-century stamped brick was found at West Hill.

2.4 Saxon

Domesday first records Oxted in the 12th century as 'Acstede' meaning 'place of Oak trees'. In 1202 it appears as 'Axsted', in 1210–12 'Axstude' and in 1225 it was 'Ocsted'. In 1261 the name 'Oxsted' was recorded, although it changed again a number of times following this, before returning to the current day spelling. Oxted was in the Hundred of Tenrige, or Tandridge as it is known today, and was one of many villages in the area settled during the Saxon period. By the end of the 10th century, the land in the area had been divided up into manors. Domesday records that King Harold II held the manor of Limpsfield, in the middle of the 11th century, while his mother Gida held Oxted. Following the battle of Hastings in 1066, lands in the area were seized and redistributed. Many of the parish churches in the Oxted area date originally from the Saxon period, but all have been rebuilt to varying degrees. St Mary's church is possibly constructed on a mound, which was a pre-Christian place of worship. Most of the fabric of Oxted church has a medieval or post-medieval to modern date, but segments of the nave walls and the ground-stage of the tower may date to the Conquest era

Both Oxted and the nearby village of Limpsfield contain ancient buildings. Limpsfield apparently boasts the oldest domestic timber-framed house in southern England: Old Court Cottage, built in 1200, was originally a hall-house for use by Abbot of Battle that was later converted to a domestic house. During the 12th century, a small Austin Priory was established in Tandridge village, off Barrow Green Road. After the dissolution it either fell into disrepair or was dismantled, as nothing remains of it today. A chance find of a Saxon urn was found in Gresham Road, Limpsfield.

2.5 Medieval

It is documented that Surrey was particularly involved in the wool trade in the medieval period. The ancient Pilgrims Way brought many travellers, including those bound for the tomb of St Thomas in Canterbury, and a number of inns sprang up in Oxted at this time to cater for the passing trade. Three of Oxted's inns are believed to have medieval origins: The George Inn, built in the late 15th century; Old Bell Inn, built at a similar date and Crown Inn. The earliest dwelling still remaining on the High Street is Crown Hill Cottages. The 'Black Death' devastated Surrey's villages and it is documented that Oxted may have been wiped out at this time. It is believed that the village was rebuilt on the raised site where Old Oxted stands today. During the reorganisation that followed, John de la Stockett had his own manor house built at Oxted, known today as Stocketts Manor. The manor of Titsey passed to the Earl of Buckingham in 1295 and was held by that family until 1483, when the lands were seized by the Crown. After this John Uvedale acquired the property and his family

held it until 1534, when a wealthy London merchant banker, John Gresham purchased it. Oxted church was altered during the 14th century. Medieval activity is further evidenced in the area around the church by the discovery of the chance finds of a shoe buckle and a horse harness pendent.

2.6 Post-medieval

In 1636 Surrey was the eighteenth richest county in England, but by 1693 it had risen to the second richest. The Abbots of Battle had held the manor of Limpsfield since the Conquest, but following the dissolution of 1536–1539 many properties were surrendered to the King, and in September 1539 Henry VIII granted the manors of Limpsfield and Broadham to Sir John Gresham. The manors remained in the hands of the Greshams until 1746 and the property was sold to Bouchier Cleeve of London. When the estate came up for sale again in 1768 the Greshams bought it back, but they lost it again some years later and it then became the property of the Leveson-Gowers.

St Mary's church also underwent many alterations in this period. In July 1719 "Oxted church was burnt by lightning. The spire and other parts of the church were destroyed, but the church was rebuilt. All visible traces of the Saxon church mentioned in Domesday were lost to the successive rebuilding, but there are a few indications of Norman work visible at the base of the tower. In 1877 the church was completely renovated, re-roofed and enlarged by the addition of the north transept. Over the centuries the churchyard has expanded in different directions. Firstly burial occurred solely on the mound itself. Adjoining parts were later added to the north and north-east (the 'new burial ground'). Across the Church Lane is an extension, now virtually filled, and the further section is at present in use.

The surrounding area was generally agricultural in the late 1800s, but chalk quarrying and lime working had always been carried out to a certain extent. During the 19th century the Limeworks industry really took off and the Oxted Greystone Lime Company had its own railway line built to transport products to the station. By the 20th century Oxted had grown into a bustling town, with the ancient villages of Oxted and Limpsfield spreading to meet each other around the railway station.

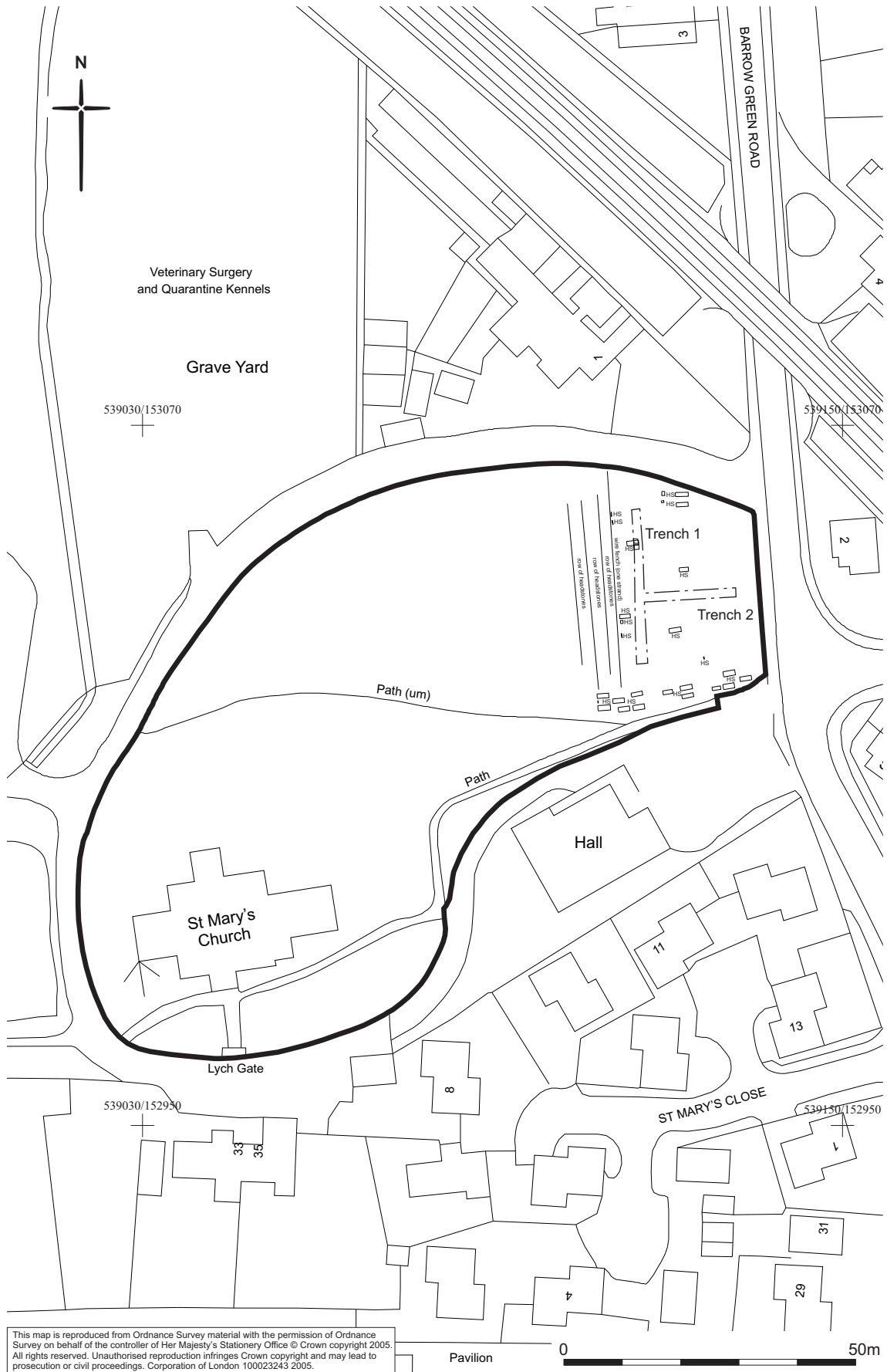


Fig 2 Trench location plan

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation were carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (Sections 2.3 and 2.4; Hoad, 2005), and the MoLAS *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

Two trenches, in a 'T' configuration were excavated within the footprint of the proposed development. Trench 1 was located on the western side of the site aligned north-south, along the line of the buildings western foundation trench. This trench measured 26.50m. At right angles to it, and along the line of another wall foundation trench, Trench 2 was excavated. It measured 15.50m long. The trench locations are illustrated in Figure 2. The trenches were excavated by tracked machine, with a ditching bucket under MoLAS supervision down to the top of the natural sand horizon. A scaled sectional drawing was made to record the sequence of deposits in Trench 1.

Trenches were located by the MoLAS Geomatics Section and then plotted onto the OS grid. This information was used in conjunction with a site survey plan supplied by Oxted Community Hall Appeal Committee¹. Heights of observations were recorded relative to Ordnance Datum from a Bench Mark located on the south-west corner of the tower of St Mary's Church, with a value of 105.73m OD. A traverse from this point established a height of 105.01m OD on the road, south-east of the site.

A written and drawn record of all deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MoLAS *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

The site has produced: 1 site diary, Levels data, survey data, 1 trench location plan; 2 trench sheets and 11 digital camera photographs.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code SY-OXTY05 in the MoLAS archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

3.2.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located on the western side of the site within the footprint of the western side of the proposed new building. The ground was overgrown and a deposit of sand was present, covering a grave that lay within the line of the trench. This was cleared back to expose the extent of the gravestone in order to avoid disturbance. The site survey of the area indicated a single grave, but during clearance it was evident that a

¹ Site Survey drawing no 199/PO scale 1:200 by Howard Sharp and Partners (March 2003)

second one was present, adjacent to it. Both graves were left intact and their positions located by the MoLAS Geomatics team.

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	West side of site
Dimensions	26.50m N-S x 2m wide
Modern ground level (turf/topsoil)	105.31m OD (N); 105.56m OD (S)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level at base trench	104.25m OD (N); 104.89m OD (S)
Natural observed	Coarse sand between 105.11-105.26 m OD

Natural sand was located 0.20m below the top of ground level between 105.26m OD at the south end and 105.11m OD at the north. Above this was a topsoil and turf at a height of 105.46m OD in the south and 105.31m OD in the north (Fig 3). No archaeological deposits were recorded.

3.2.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to the east and at right angles to Trench 1 running in an easterly direction.

<i>Evaluation Trench 2</i>	
Location	Central area of site
Dimensions	15.50m E-W x 2m wide
Modern ground level (turf/topsoil)	105.30m OD (W); 105.75m OD (E)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level at base trench	104.98m OD (W); 105.38m OD (E)
Natural observed	Coarse sand between 105.15-105.60 m OD

Natural sand was located 0.15m below the top of ground level between 105.15m OD at the west end and 105.60m OD at the east. Above this was a topsoil and turf at a height of 105.30m OD to the west and 105.75m OD to the east. No archaeological deposits were recorded.

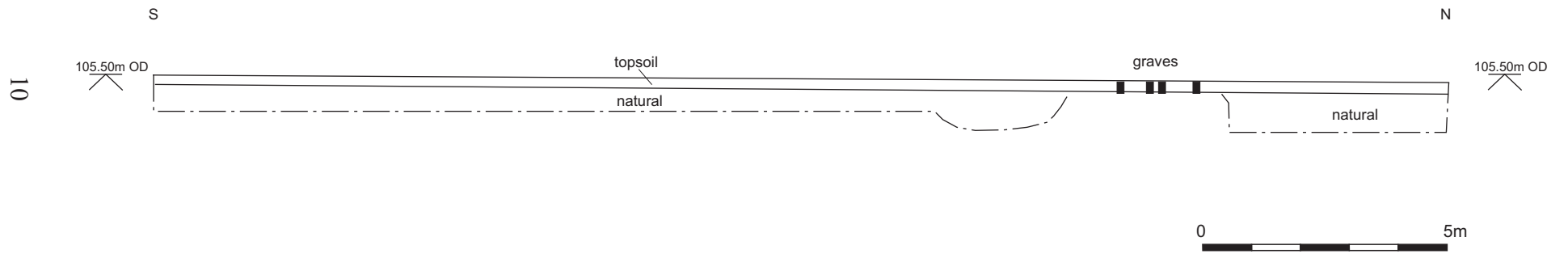


Fig 3 Section drawing through Trench 1

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

Natural sand was present across the site with its surface sloping away from the south-east at 105.60m OD down to 105.11m OD in the north-west. This reflects the present ground surface, as indicated by the site survey plan.

What are the earliest deposits identified?

No archaeological deposits were found on the site.

Are there any deposits that could be related to the mound on which the church is situated, and if so, what are they?

No deposits related to the mound on which the church is situated were found.

What are the latest deposits identified?

No archaeological deposits were found on the site.

What is the density of burials on the site, and how have they affected the earlier archaeological deposits?

No additional burials were found within the evaluation trenches. Those marked on the site survey plan supplied were confirmed as the only burials present on the site. In addition a footstone of a grave, found towards the southern side of the site, was located and added to the data for the site, as was a second grave, buried by a pile of sand towards the northern end of Trench 1.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation demonstrated that no archaeological deposits were present on the site.

4.3 Significance

With the exception of the burials, the site revealed no significant archaeological data.

5 Assessment by EH criteria

The Department of the Environment published a set of guidelines with criteria by which to measure the importance of individual monuments for possible Scheduling. These criteria are as follows: *Period*; *Rarity*; *Documentation*; *Survival/Condition*; *Fragility/Vulnerability*; *Diversity* and *Potential*. The guidelines stress that 'these criteria should not...be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case'.²

In the following passages the potential archaeological survival described in the initial *Assessment* document (Lyon, 2005) and Section 3.2 above will be assessed against these criteria.

Criterion 1: period

The only potential of the site related to the late 19th century/early 20th century burials within the deconsecrated part of the graveyard.

Criterion 2: rarity

Not applicable.

Criterion 3: documentation

The burials will have been documented and relate to the late 19th/early 20th century.

Criterion 4: group value

Not applicable

Criterion 5: survival/condition

The evaluation has demonstrated that no archaeological deposits are preserved.

Criterion 6: fragility

The aim of the proposed method of construction for the new development is not to disturb any of the burials, but the headstones will need to be relocated.

Criterion 7: diversity

Not applicable

Criterion 8: potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of deposits containing archaeological evidence, is very poor.

² Annex 4, DOE, Planning and Policy Guidance 16, (1990). For detailed definition of the criteria see that document. Reference has also been made to Darvill, Saunders & Startin, (1987); and McGill, (1995)

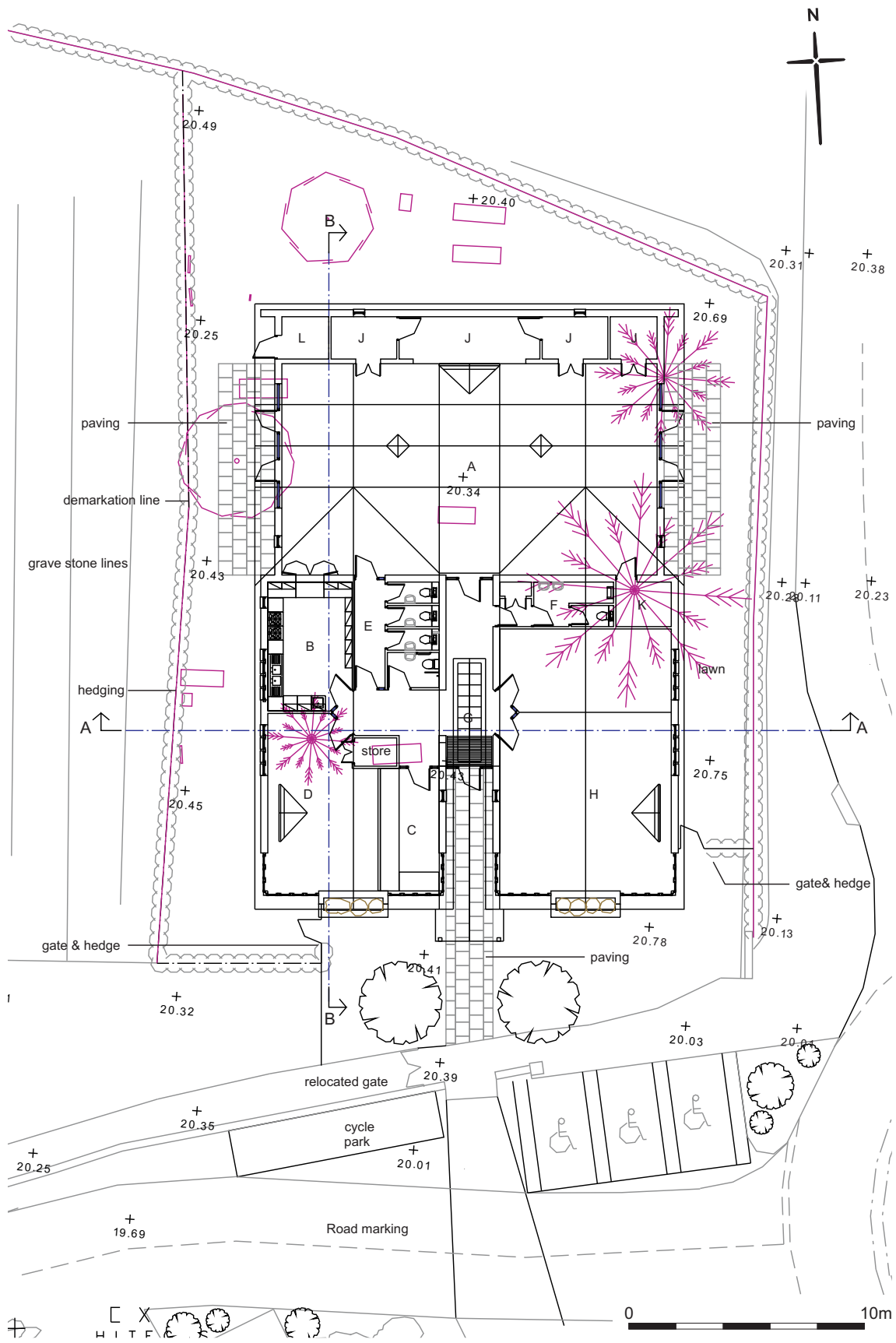


Fig 4 Plan of proposed development

6 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed development on the site consists of a new community hall (Fig 4)³. It is provisionally estimated that the foundations of the proposed building will be up to 1m deep, though exact methods of construction have not been finalised. The foundations will aim not to disturb any of the burials, interred in this area between 1868 and the late 1920s, but the headstones will need to be relocated. The evaluation has demonstrated that no archaeological deposits are present on the site.

³ Drawing no 199/P10 by Howard Sharp and Partners (April 2005)

7 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Oxted Community Hall Appeal Committee for funding the evaluation. The author would also like to thank Martin Fisher, Sarah Paxton and Martin Eves for their assistance on site during the evaluation and Penny Molyneux of Molyneux Architects for supplying digital copies of the site survey and proposed development plans.

8 Bibliography

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9 OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-8570

Project details

Project name Oxted Community Hall

Short description of the project This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) on the site of the proposed Oxted Community Hall), Oxted, Surrey. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by Oxted Community Hall Appeal Committee. The site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential as defined by the Surrey County Council and within part of a churchyard, requiring a Faculty, or a Licence issued by the office of Chancellor of the Diocesan authorities to carry out archaeological work. Following the recommendations of the County's Principal Archaeologist two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site. The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. Natural sand was found in both trenches ranging from 105.60m at its highest, on the east side of the site, and 105.11m OD, its lowest, on the northern side. The natural was sealed with topsoil and turf. No archaeological evidence was found. During the evaluation, any additional graves found, and not previously located on the current site survey plan, were added.

Project dates Start: 06-06-2005 End: 07-06-2005

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes SY-OXT05 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)

Current Land use Other 4 - Churchyard

Monument type GRAVES Post Medieval

Methods techniques & 'Targeted Trenches'

Development type Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location SURREY TANDRIDGE OXTED Oxted Community Hall

Postcode RH8

Study area 620.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 3912 5230 51.2523437188 -0.00626292529820 51 15 08 N
000 00 22 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 105.11m Max: 105.60m

Project creators

Name of MoLAS
Organisation

Project originator brief Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project originator design MoLAS

Project director/manager Stewart Hoad

Project supervisor Portia Askew

Type of Oxted Community Hall Appel Committee
sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Digital recipient Archive Guildford Museum

Digital Archive ID SY-OXT05

Digital available Media 'Survey'

Paper recipient Archive Guildford Museum

Paper Archive ID SY-OXT05

Paper Contents 'none'

Paper available Media 'Diary','Miscellaneous Material','Report','Section','Survey','Unpublished Text'

Paper Archive notes 1 diary, 2 trench sheets, Levels data, 1 section drawing

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Oxted Community Hall, Oxted, RH8. An archaeological evaluation report

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